

**From all that skin
we never pressed**

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Summary:

It's him and his skin and his wounds and the way he feels sorry for himself

From all that skin we never pressed

Every part of your body a person can touch: your skin, your hair, your shaky fingers and the scars a murderous clown left on your face regenerate after 27 days. After Beverly leaves, it's all Stanley can think about. He knows it is not his place to love her like this. She wants Bill. Even Ben, maybe, but not Stanley. Never Stanley. He doubts any of the losers really want him. He doubts there's ever a time when they look around and they notice he's missing. They didn't notice back in the sewers. Why should they now when all he does is drag along, watching them heal and never helping?

*

"Stanley, you coming?" Richie asks leaning on his bike. He's going to walk Eddie home. These days it feels like if you're with Eddie and Richie you're just intruding.

"I promised dad I'd help with something," he lies, almost on instinct now and Richie narrows his eyes at him, opens his mouth as if to argue and then decides against it, turns to Eddie.

"Looks like it's just you and me, Eds," he says.

"Don't fucking call me that," Eddie answers, but his tone goes soft midway through the sentence and Stanley feels like he shouldn't be here. Digs his nails into the palms of his hands for a moment. Breathes out. Gets on his bike before they're done having their moment. All they ever do is have moments. All they ever do is grow closer and Stanley feels like he's watching them from far far away. Watching them from-

Just watching them. It doesn't matter where he is. It's them two and then it's him and it's Billy and Ben and Mike and then it's him. And it's Bev, all the way in Portland and it's him and his skin and his wounds and the way he feels sorry for himself. He says his goodbye and then he pedals home. Writes Beverly a letter about how lonely he feels. His father reads the letters he sends and the letters he receives so he keeps this one in the bottom of his drawer, never sends it. Him and his loneliness and his messy handwriting and all of Beverly's

letters underneath his bed, like a reminder she is real.

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For a little while it seemed like Eddie got him. Eddie with his broken bones and a cast that has turned an ugly yellow from the dirt and the red V that shines through, a testament to how they will never be cool, not even now when they saved this stupid fucking town from a stupid fucking monster. No one cares about them still and it makes Stanley so angry sometimes he wants to scream at every person in their school. They saved them. They fucking *saved* them and no one cares.

For a little while he could see the same anger in Eddie's eyes that he himself woke up with but then it went, slowly at first and then all at once as if he healed overnight when they took off his cast. As if his broken arm was the only bad thing that happened. He knows that's not how it happened, of course. In Stanley's mind he pictures Richie physically dragging Eddie out of it, hand in hand and Stanley waits for them to come get him too. They don't. At least not the way they do with each other but they show up. Eventually.

Eddie with a movie that does not sound interesting but is probably the safest thing they could find and Richie with microwavable popcorn (butter, of course, because Stanley hates it and Richie knows he hates it and they used to argue about it all the time. It used to be their thing and this time it almost makes him cry but he doesn't because he's not going to cry in front of Richie *because* of Richie but it almost does and it's good. Makes him feel like nothing happened, if only for a moment). He burns it in the microwave and Richie says he prefers burned popcorn anyway and Eddie tells both of them to shut the fuck up and they watch the boring movie and then they call Bill's house and they all ride their bikes for a little while even though it's getting way too cold for that now.

*

They don't have their own lunch table, they're not cool enough for that but they find space in the corner of the cafeteria and they fight over chocolate pudding as if it's actually any good. It's easier to pretend they care about it than to admit it's been hard to keep food

down. Some days they throw up in the stalls next to each other. Some days he throws up alone or he watches Richie take Eddie to the back of the school because he refuses to step inside the school bathrooms. Some days Bill stands next to him and runs his fingers through Stanley's hair until there's nothing left in his stomach and then he leans against the sink while Stanley rinses his mouth and talks the entire time and on the good days he doesn't stutter once and on the bad days he does and Stanley gets angry and tells him to shut up and Bill listens. He's hurt and he listens. They never talk about those days. They should but they never do.

*

"Yes," Beverly says over the phone, Mike, Ben, Bill and Stanley (Richie and Eddie are late, as usual, these days) huddled over it trying to hear her. "*Julliet*."

"That's awesome, Bev," Ben says, still sounds as lovestruck as he was before she left.

"W-who's-" Bill starts and before he can finish, Stanley asks:

"Who's playing Romeo?" because they're all thinking it. Okay, maybe Mike isn't thinking it. Or maybe he is. Stanley doesn't know anymore. Maybe everyone in the world is in love with Beverly Marsh. It would make sense, he thinks.

When he lifts his head, Bill is looking at him. Stanley blinks. Forgets to listen to Beverly's answer.

*

He's allergic to honey. His grandfather says that no one is allergic to honey that Stanley's allergic to store bought crap because of what the government puts in it. He says that about everything, though. Stanley finishes his dinner and watches his mother, tired and silent, the way she always looks when his grandfather is over and then he listens to her complain to his dad through the bathroom door. He spits the toothpaste out in the sink and turns on the water. Drowns out his mother's voice. Focuses on washing his hands and then his face. Feels like Eddie. Keeps the water running longer than he should. Tries his

hardest not to think about Beverly's bathroom. Sleeps with the light on. And-

And he's allergic to honey. He tells Beverly about it in one of the letters he sends and in her reply she sends him a postcard with a bee on it. "You're sweet like honey" it reads and Stanley hangs it above his bed. If Richie was to come into his room he'd tease him about it. He hasn't been inside since way before Pennywise. They sit in the living room instead and Stanley hides the baby blue of his wallpaper from his best friends. Like how childish your room looks is still something to be embarrassed about, even after everything that happened.

*

"You t-think they'll ever t-tell us?" Bill asks, watching Richie threaten Eddie with snow. His scarf is dark green. Stanley gave it to him the last Christmas Georgie was still alive. He remembers because Georgie had put it on and told Bill it was his and he could have the toy train Georgie got in exchange. Stanley wonders if that's what Bill thinks about every time he sees it, too.

"Probably," he says and he's answering both Bill and himself. "Not like it isn't obvious."

Eddie is yelling about murdering Richie and Richie is laughing, cheeks bright red.

"W-would you t-tell us i-if you li-liked someone?" when Stanley turns, Bill is still looking ahead at the other two losers. And Bill has always been good at seeing things other people try to hide.

Stanley swallows. Stops and Bill stops with him, as if he knew Stanley would do that. Of course he did. He always does.

"You angry at me?"

"Of c-course not," Bill answers, calm, turns to look at him. Smiles. "She's- you know. She's Beverly."

"Yeah."

“Yeah.”

“Are you losers joining us or are you gonna stand there like virgins?” Richie yells. When they turn to look at him, he’s running circles to avoid the snowballs Eddie throws at him.

“D-didn’t even make sense, R-Richie,” Bill says but he’s smiling, kneeling down to make a snowball himself.

*

Beverly writes letters every week until she doesn't for two entire months and when the next one comes she spends half of it apologizing. Mostly to Bill. It makes sense, of course, but it's just a bigger reminder that Stanley will never be as important to her as she is to him. He only fell in love with her after she left. It's his own fault.

He sends her a postcard with a picture of Derry and a "wish you were here" scribbled at the bottom. She writes: "i'd rather you guys were here. No killer clowns in Portland" when his father asks about it, Stanley tells him it's an inside joke. He doesn't look like he believes him but he never does.

Stanley shows the postcard to the others and they all look like they're in pain. Sometimes Beverly feels like a pigment of Stanley's imagination. Too perfect to be true. Her hair like fire and her skin soft and sun kissed and he will never be the only one in love with her. She comes to him in his dreams, lips red and eyes filled with wonder. She was made for bigger things than teenage boys who cannot stop thinking about her.

*

In his dreams he is falling. Ben says it means he is growing. Stanley doesn't feel any taller, but Ben is probably right.

*

They stand in Bill's backyard, shivering under their coats and their blankets, talking as quietly as they can so they wouldn't wake Bill's parents.

"If you see a star fall you make a wish," Ben tells them like they don't know already.

"Mm, I'm wishing for Eddie's mom," Richie mumbles, sleepily and lets out a loud "oof" when Eddie elbows him in the ribs. "Aw, cmon Eds, you know I'd wish for you if I didn't already have you."

"You're about to lose me, asshole," Eddie answers and Stanley smiles, fights the urge to lean against the wall of Bill's house.

By the time they see any falling stars, Mike has given up and gone back to sleep and Richie and Eddie are inside because Eddie's convinced he'll get a cold if he stays outside for that long.

Ben and Bill are leaning into Stanley on either side, all three of them tired enough to fall asleep standing.

"Maybe," Ben starts right before they see it and he shuts up to make his wish and three weeks later Stanley will find out that they all wished for the same thing.

*

Beverly comes back. In the passenger seat of the same truck she left in. Her hair is still short and her fingers still have faint nicotine marks on them and she hugs Bill before she hugs anyone else. When she hugs Stanley, she smells like apples. His hands shake on her waist.

"I missed you," she says, her voice trembling.

"I missed you too, Bev," Stanley answers. He has a scar where her cheek is pressing against his. Over her shoulder he can see Bill watching them. Lets her go. When Bill smiles at him, he smiles back. He knows it is not his place to love her like this. That's fine as long as he can love her at all. As long as he can love all of them.

Author's Note:

title from paris by pegasus bridge bc its a stanley/
beverly song but also a richie/eddie song

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anyone cares